

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 11-181—sSB 1103

Education Committee

Human Services Committee

Appropriations Committee

Government Administration and Elections Committee

**AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF A COORDINATED SYSTEM OF EARLY CARE
AND EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

SUMMARY: This act creates, by July 1, 2013, a coordinated system of early care and education and child development (i.e., “system”). It requires the governor, by July 15, 2011 to appoint a planning director within the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to develop a plan to implement the system. The act lists the system’s duties and the things the planning director must consider in developing the implementation plan. It requires various state agencies to help him or her develop the plan.

It (1) requires the system to collaborate with local and regional early childhood councils to implement the system at the local level and (2) lists the childhood council’s duties in the collaboration.

It requires the planning director to report to the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and several legislative committees, at various times, on the progress in planning and implementing the system.

The act eliminates the State Department of Education’s (SDE) Office of Early Childhood Planning, Outreach and Coordination and all of its duties.

It also changes the membership of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and expands it from 17 to 20.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2011

**§ 3 — EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
SYSTEM PLANNING DIRECTOR**

The act requires the governor to appoint, in consultation with the early childhood cabinet, a planning director within OPM to plan and develop the system. The appointment must be made (1) within available appropriations or funded by donations from private sources or federal funds and (2) by July 15, 2011.

§ 3 — SYSTEM PLAN

The director must develop a plan for the system that consolidates existing early childhood education and child care programs and services for children from birth to age eight into a coordinated system that attempts to:

1. reduce the academic achievement gap;

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2. increase participation in early childhood education programs;
3. increase parent engagement, family literacy, and parenting skills;
4. increase oral language development and social competence;
5. decrease special education placements; and
6. support parents and guardians of young children on finding and retaining employment and encourage such parents and guardians to attend work training programs.

Consolidation may include school readiness programs, Head Start, the family resource center program established in law, child care facilities, state-contracted child care center program guidelines, the birth-to-three program, professional development activities relating to early childhood education, and any other relevant early childhood programs and services.

The act requires the planning director, when developing the plan, to:

1. consider opportunities for inter- and intra-agency consolidation to reduce redundancy and improve the focus on positive outcomes for children and families;
2. provide for the creation of memoranda of agreement (MOA) between the coordinated system and nonprofit and philanthropic organizations;
3. identify opportunities to align services and meet the holistic needs of children and families;
4. implement an accountability framework to measure program and service outcomes;
5. identify common requirements for funding from various sources and identify waiver provisions related to these requirements that can be used to improve service delivery in the state;
6. identify barriers under state or federal law that inhibit effective consolidation of functions or use of interagency agreements;
7. consult with qualified local and regional planning groups; and
8. focus the MOA to relevant program areas, such as maternal and child health, literacy, family support, financial planning, and early care and education.

For purposes of the system plan development, the planning director may enter into a MOA with and accept donations from nonprofit and philanthropic organizations.

The departments of Education, Social Services (DSS), Public Health (DPH), Children and Families (DCF), Developmental Services, and Higher Education must help the director plan and develop the system.

§ 2 — EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

The act creates, by July 1, 2013, a coordinated system of early care and education and child development that must consist of comprehensive and aligned policies, responsibilities, practices, and services for young children and their families, including prenatal care and care for children from birth to age eight to ensure optimal health, safety, and learning for each child. The policies, practices, and services must be in accordance with the plan the planning director develops

under the act.

This system must:

1. create a unified set of reporting requirements for (a) school readiness; (b) Head Start; (c) family resource centers; (d) child care programs, facilities, and licensing; (e) the Birth to Three program; (f) professional development activities relating to early childhood education; and (g) other relevant early childhood programs and services, in order to collect data necessary for quality assessments and longitudinal analysis;
2. compare and analyze the data collected in (1) above with the data collected in the statewide public school information system for population-level analysis of children and families;
3. develop and update (a) appropriate early learning standards and assessment tools for children from birth to age five that are age and developmentally appropriate and aligned with existing learning standards as of July 1, 2013 and (b) assessment tools for students in grades kindergarten to 12;
4. monitor and evaluate all early childhood education and child care programs and services, focusing on program outcomes in satisfying the health, safety, developmental, and educational needs of all children;
5. develop indicators that assess strategies designed to strengthen the family through parental involvement in a child's development and education, including children with special needs;
6. increase the availability of early childhood education and child care programs and services and encourage providers to work together to create options that allow families to participate in programs that serve individual needs;
7. provide information and technical assistance to people seeking such programs and services;
8. help state agencies and municipalities obtain available federal funding for early childhood education and child care programs and services;
9. provide technical assistance and consultation to licensed providers of early childhood education and child care programs and services and help any potential provider obtain licensure and certification;
10. create, implement, and maintain a quality rating and improvement system that covers home-based, center-based, and school-based early child care and learning;
11. maintain an accreditation system to help early childhood education and child care programs and services achieve national standards and improve the programs;
12. create partnerships between state agencies and philanthropic organizations to help implement the system;
13. align the system's policy and program goals with those of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and the Head Start advisory committee;
14. ensure a coordinated and comprehensive statewide system of professional development for providers of early childhood education and child care programs and services;

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15. develop family-centered services that assist families in their communities;
16. provide families with opportunities to choose services, including quality child care;
17. integrate early childhood education and special education services;
18. emphasize targeted research-based interventions;
19. organize services into a coherent system;
20. coordinate a comprehensive and accessible delivery system for early childhood education and child care services;
21. focus on performance measures to ensure that services are accountable, effective, and accessible to the consumer;
22. promote universal access to early childhood care and education;
23. ensure non-duplication of monitoring and evaluation;
24. encourage, promote, and coordinate funding to establish and administer local and regional early childhood councils that implement local and regional birth-to-eight systems; and
25. perform any other activities to assist in providing early childhood education and child care programs and services.

§ 2 — SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION

The act requires the system to collaborate with local and regional early childhood councils to implement the system at the local level.

The early childhood councils must:

1. develop and implement a comprehensive plan for an early childhood system for the community the council serves;
2. develop policy and program planning;
3. encourage community participation by emphasizing substantial parental involvement;
4. collect, analyze, and evaluate data focusing on program and service outcomes;
5. allocate resources; and
6. perform any other functions to help provide early childhood programs and services.

The early childhood councils may enter into MOAs with the local or regional school readiness council of the town or region the early childhood council serves to perform the duties and functions of a school readiness council. If no such local or regional school readiness council exists for the town or region of such early childhood council, the early childhood council may perform the duties and functions that a local readiness council would perform.

The system may enter into MOAs with and accept donations from nonprofit and philanthropic organizations to implement the system at the local level.

§ 3 — REPORTING ON PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

The act imposes various reporting requirements on the planning director. From October 1, 2011 to July 1, 2013, the planning director must report quarterly to the early childhood cabinet. The report may include:

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1. recommendations on agency consolidation to improve coordination within the system;
2. suggestions on how to combine federal, state, and local resources to maximize system efficiencies and outcomes for children and families;
3. suggestions to improve the coordination of state and local early childhood education initiatives to provide holistic, affordable, high quality, early education for young children;
4. recommendations for system improvements; and
5. assurances that the statutory guidelines for state-contracted child care center programs are being preserved in the planning and development of the coordinated system.

From January 1, 2012, to July 1, 2013, the planning director must semiannually report to the Appropriations, Human Services, and Education committees. The report may include the same items listed above for quarterly reports to the early childhood cabinet.

By January 30, 2013, the planning director must report to the Appropriations, Human Services, and Education committees with recommendations on which department should serve as the lead agency and where the staff of the coordinated system should be located.

§ 4 — AGENCIES BASED IN THE SDE

The act requires the early childhood cabinet, director of the Connecticut Head Start Collaboration Office, Head Start advisory committee, and Accreditation Facilitation Project of Connecticut Charts-A-Course to be based in the SDE for purposes of (1) system planning and development and (2) working with nonprofit and philanthropic organizations.

§ 5 — OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PLANNING ELIMINATED

The act eliminates the Office of Early Childhood Planning and its duty to:

1. plan, develop, and coordinate, with other agencies, the delivery of services to children from birth to age nine;
2. coordinate the implementation of an Early Childhood Education Information System capable of tracking numerous elements of school readiness programs and the children they serve;
3. develop and report on an early childhood accountability plan, in consultation with the cabinet;
4. implement a communications strategy for outreach to families, service providers, and policymakers;
5. start a statewide longitudinal evaluation of early childhood programs, in consultation with DSS; and
6. develop, coordinate, and support public and private partnerships to aid early childhood initiatives.

§ 1 — EARLY CHILDHOOD CABINET MEMBERSHIP

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The cabinet is made up the heads or representatives of various departments, including SDE, DSS, and DPH, plus legislators and representatives of prekindergarten programs.

The act changes and expands the cabinet membership. It:

1. replaces the mental health and addiction services commissioner with the DCF commissioner,
2. changes the House minority leader's appointment from a Head Start program representative to a parent of a child attending a school readiness program,
3. adds the House majority leader's appointment of a Connecticut Family Resource Center Alliance representative,
4. adds the Senate majority leader's appointment of a state-funded child care center representative, and
5. increases the gubernatorial appointments from one to two by adding a representative of the Connecticut Head Start Association.

BACKGROUND

School Readiness

School readiness programs provide nonsectarian developmentally appropriate learning for three- and four-year-olds (and five-year-olds who are not eligible to enroll in school or choose school readiness instead according to statute). The programs must provide at least 450 hours over at least 180 days, with some exceptions, and must meet state standards (CGS § 10-16p).

Early Childhood Cabinet's Duties to Satisfy Federal Head Start

The cabinet carries out various coordination and planning duties and submits annual reports to the legislature with respect to children from birth to age nine (CGS § 10-16z(b)). These duties are required to satisfy the 2007 federal Head Start Act (P.L. 110-134).

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